

Army training returns to campus

'Leadership College' marches forward with ROTC program

BY TIM MCCARTHY

What is sacrifice? To most students at Fitchburg State College, sacrifice is giving up a late-night movie marathon to study, or going home for a weekend to baby-sit younger siblings, or merely giving an hour or so of time to a local soup kitchen.

But to a select few students here at FSC, sacrifice is an intense commitment of time and effort that will affect their lives and their future careers.

Who are these students? They're the cadets of the recently reinstated Army Reserve Officer Training Corps., here on campus.

This semester, Fitchburg State College resumed offering the ROTC program and military-science minor after a 15-year suspension of the program.

While the program and courses have

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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN INDIANA PHOTO

Field training is part of the program for Army ROTC students at colleges and universities across the country.



STAFF PHOTO BY NICOLETTA AMATO

FSC students enjoy meals in the refurbished Holmes Dining Commons, but some ask whether it was money well spent.

Students question construction priorities

BY CASSIE URBANO

Take a look around the Fitchburg State College campus. Notice anything different? Of course you do. It's hard to ignore the various large construction and landscaping projects that have been taking place across campus. Parking lots have been renovated and expanded, the dining hall has been completely revamped and the information-technology center is currently being rebuilt.

Even though these projects have been making the campus appear far more attractive, many students are still concerned that the budget is not being

used for their benefit. Jason McTigue, a third-year FSC student, says, "The amount of ridiculously decadent architecture that was put into the dining hall was ludicrous. You do not need [expensive] sheets of glass as walls because they are pretty."

A more common complaint, regarding parking, is heard from both commuters and resident students.

Mary Alcala, an FSC commuter, sighs when talking about parking. "It's so hard to find a space," she says. "When it snows, you can't even park on the streets. I don't want to park at

Civic [Center]." Renovations to the on-campus lots have added fences and new lighting along with more spaces. Still, says Brittany Vara, an FSC senior, "I've had my car broken into more times this year."

Other students say FSC is using the budget foolishly on items such as the LCD screens found throughout the campus buildings. McTigue complains that he doesn't see the need for them, but since they are there, "They could at least have important and up-to-date information."

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How can you be merry if you don't have much money to spend on holiday gifts? Check out the suggestions on Page 2.



Sorry - this festive Christmas tree costume from www.buycostumes.com is too pricey to make our Top 10 gift list.

Gifts under the tree for under \$50

BY DEREK JOHNSON

So Christmas time is right around the corner now, and we can smell the ham and eggnog. The air is colder, the days are shorter, and you know what that means: Busier malls, more traffic, and Santas who are encouraged to lose weight and not say "ho, ho, ho" because it may offend women (whatever!)

And then there's the gift-giving. That can be a problem on the typical college budget. Maybe you chugged ketchup for 20 minutes to earn \$50; you hit mom and dad up for some spare change because you're "sick of college food"; you earned some extra dough by throwing a huge party and charging at the door; or maybe you actually work while going to school. Whatever your story is, chances are that your bank account does not contain six zeros, and you're lucky if it has two.

So what is a broke, desperate undergrad to do? What do we get our families, boyfriends or girlfriends, and friends, when we have to scrap for change to get a \$2 bottle of water?

Well, having been in this game called college for some time now (fifth year, thank you), I have had enough practice to know what works and what doesn't - and, more importantly, who they do and don't work for.

So here's my list, in no particular order, of the 10 best things to give the people on your list while keeping gifts to under \$50.

10. Non-alcoholic wine or beer

This gift is ideal for the friend or roommate who is always skipping Friday - and sometimes Tuesday and Wednesday - classes because of the night before. Inexpensive (you're in college, you'll drink anything), and guaranteed not to cause a hangover, a nice bottle of non-alcoholic cabernet sauvignon is sure to make the person feel all warm inside.

Works for: Friends, roommates, possibly parents

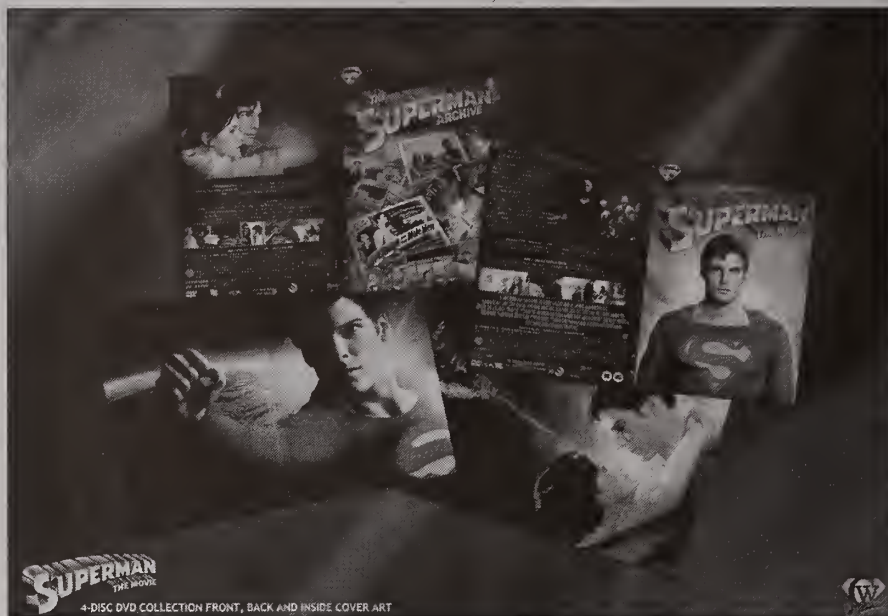
Doesn't work for: Those who could use it most

Average price: \$8-\$36

9. DVD's

This is perhaps the easiest gift to buy, and anyone will love a DVD of their favorite TV show, movie, or cartoon. From this summer's killer blockbuster that's finally out, or - if you're like me - the absolute worst B-movie on the bargain shelf for 99 cents, there is a DVD for everyone. You know that your roommate has been talking about the "Spider-Man Three Pack" for the past five weeks; you've heard your dad complain that they don't make good wholesome shows like "Leave it To Beaver" anymore; your boyfriend and his pals keep reciting "The Simpsons" quotes over and over. Let them bask in the marvel of a pause that is accurate, and "chapter skip" as they're able to relive all of their favorite moments. No need to go all hi-def either. Extra feature are nice, and appreciated by hardcore fans, but regular editions are liked by all.

Bonus: Get something that both of you will like, and you have a gift for yourself as well.



DVDs, such as these from www.capedwonder.com, make versatile gifts.

Works for: Possibly anyone

Doesn't work for: Mole-people - they don't have TV's. Or vision.

Average price: 99 cents-\$30

8. Something hand-made

Seriously, try it. This gift is the way to go if you or your significant other is the artsy type; there is an unlimited supply of junk around to make something special. Here are a few examples: A framed picture of you; a bottle-cap mosaic; a painted picture; a 4.0 essay or a dean's list report card, framed for your folks; a big candle with trinkets glued to it. Sure, some of it may seem a little juvenile, but if you're a girl making for a guy, you're off the hook because - well, you're a girl and you can make artsy stuff for gifts. If you're a guy making for a girl, then you officially are now one of the most affectionate and creative people she's ever met.

Works for: Possibly anybody

Doesn't work for: No one - anyone who turns down a picture frame with BFF written at the top in fuchsia and lilac is not your BFF

Average price: None-some, depending on supplies

7. Cash

If you're in a tight spot and you absolutely can't think of anything to get, throw them a Jackson wrapped in a card.

Works for: Possibly anyone

Doesn't work for: Parents - these people paid for you to get through school, you probably owe them your first eight years' pay out of college, and the best gift you can think of is \$20? Don't hold your breath for their next care package.

Average price: However much you want to dish out

6. Food/good coffee

Your roommate or best friend is tired of the cafeteria, tired of delivery, and tired of late-night Store 24 sandwiches? Get them a gift certificate to a good restaurant. Let them indulge in a nice steak or fancy salad away from mom and dad's cooking. Got someone who doesn't know there is actual human interaction before a cup

of joe? How about your parents, who needed caffeine all of those years dropping you off at elementary school and now survive off of it? Instead of their usual get-cold-to-wait-in-line medium French vanilla, opt to get them a one-pound bag of some Starbucks holiday blend, Gevalia chocolate-raspberry blend, or try TheCoffee.com for a range of over 250 different flavors that will surely wake them up.

Works for: Anyone

Doesn't work for: The dieters

Average price: \$5.25-\$15 for 1-pound bags, up to \$35 for 5 pounds

5. Grab bag

Whether it's the roommate who is always cleaning around the apartment, the dorm-mate who loves Ramen Noodles, or the friend who lives in constant fear that too many batteries are never enough, the dollar store (Dollar Tree is the closest around here for actual \$1 items) has everything you need - from a candy bar to Pat Benatar - for one American dollar. You can even find the bags to put the stuff in, the tape and wrapping paper to make it pretty, and the Sharpie to write their name on it.

Works for: College students, roommates

Doesn't work for: No one - this store has everything you can think of, and everyone can benefit from something useful.

Average price: Uh, \$1?

4. CD's

CD's are different from DVD's because some people might still have a VHS, but most everyone owns a CD player. With the slow download time of the school servers, file-sharing sites take forever. You're probably tired of hearing them ask to borrow your Smashing Pumpkins or Soulja Boy CD. Get them their own copy.

Works for: Anyone

Doesn't work for: No one - even the brave souls who do download music on to their computer can still appreciate a Beatles greatest-hits album, or a few Jay-Z, Roots, or Warren G old-school CD's.

Average price: \$3 (used)- \$21

3. Magazine subscription

This one could be a twofer as well. Every now and then there are the students running around campus and the town with these "sweepstakes" where they sell magazine subscriptions for real cheap; then if they sell the most they get to go to Prague, or somewhere a lot cooler than a frat party. (I personally don't trust the door-to-door thing and a check with my routing number on it, but it's inexpensive to risk-takers). This can knock out mom's Home and Garden, dad's Golf Digest, and your brother's Maxim subscriptions for a fraction of the newsstand price. If you don't want to give out money to strangers on foot, walking into any CVS, Wal-Mart, or bookstore, into the magazine aisle, and plucking the offer cards from the magazines of choice should work too.

Works for: Anyone

Doesn't work for: The reading loather - there's always one person you know who absolutely detests groups of letters that form words. That could even be solved by Photograph Monthly or Playboy ... but then again, people only read that "for the articles."

Average price: about \$8 for one subscription - \$12-15 for three or four

2. Pictures

Probably the most sentimental idea on the list, a picture of yourself in an elegant or classic frame is guaranteed to put a smile on a loved one's face. Wal-Mart is a cheap place to grab a self-portrait with surprisingly good quality prints.

Works for: Anyone

Doesn't work for: People without souls - no one will have any problem with a gift like this unless they work for Beelzebub.

Average price: \$2-25 for a frame; \$8-\$40 for photo packages at Wal-Mart

1. Gift cards

The coup-de-grâce of gifts has to be the gift card. It could be because you're sure that it's a shirt that they wanted, but don't know their size; you know they love electronics but aren't sure what they have and don't have; or you're completely clueless and don't want to give just cash, the gift card has your back. The gift card can purchase everything I mentioned on this list, and you know it will be exactly what they wanted. They can have even more freedom if you give them an American Express gift card; that way they can use it anywhere that takes plastic.

Works for: Possibly anyone

Doesn't work for: Possibly parents/significant other - I don't know, you might want to put a little more effort into mom and dad's gift than a piece of plastic worth 25 bucks at Newbury Comics. And guys, I've heard that women would rather have any actual item from Tiffany's rather than just a card from there. (Assuming anything in that store is under \$50, or you just disregard any of my suggestions.)

Average price: \$5 up to whatever, usually in increments of \$5.

ROTC marching back to FSC

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always been offered at neighboring college Worcester Polytechnic Institute, the slog back and forth between campuses served as a hindrance for interested applicants at FSC.

"The military was doing a dry-down, especially with the closing of Fort Devens [in 1996]," said Maj. Fedencia E. Pagaduan, an assistant professor of military science at FSC. "Now, they brought it back to UMass and here. WPI has always had it, but the military sees Fitchburg State College as a good opportunity since we've always had one or two students commissioned per year."

So what's the appeal for students? According to Pagaduan, "It's almost a club until you decide what the direction is you want to focus on. For your freshman and sophomore year, you're there to experiment. At college, you're away from your mother so we have time-and stress-management classes. As freshmen and sophomores, they learn a lot of skills that are applicable to the outside world."

"Yes, we touch on what the Army is about, but that's not our focus as underclassmen; instead, it's on a skill set that you can use anywhere."

Hollywood images of screaming drill sergeants notwithstanding, FSC cadets speak enthusiastically about the program.

Craig Transue, a third-year cadet, remarks, "It's a great experience while being in college, especially being an older guy; it's a great club to be in. I'm proud of the service. I've been in the Army for eight years; I've chosen ROTC to continue the footsteps of my Army profession. I've been an enlisted and I'm hoping to become an officer."

A first-year cadet, Nick Bruegger, agreed, saying, "It's pretty great program to see if you're interested in continuing with a career in the military."

Pagaduan added, "I'm here just to make sure it's safe. It's student-run, even our field training exercises. We



had one in the beginning of October in Devens where they did the planning from what kind of food we were going to have down to the training. We give them the opportunity to lead the entire unit. Not only are they students, but they have hands-on training being leaders."

To earn such responsibility, students must commit themselves to a massive amount of discipline and training. "It's definitely a discipline, because we're up at 6 a.m. doing physical training. By 8 a.m. we've done more than most people accomplish by 7 or 8 o'clock at night. It is training yourself hard," said Bruegger.

Despite the difference in activities and lifestyle, ROTC classes are surprisingly similar to those in civilian life - with a military twist, of course. "You're with your cadets, you know everybody in your class, and you're all just more together. You do everything together and it's more hands-on, especially since it's presented so well," said Transue.

Unlike other classes, however, missing a question or forgetting an assignment earns one more than a verbal whack on the knuckles. "Sometimes,

if we screw up in class, we have to do push-ups for corrective training so we'd better not get it wrong," Transue said. Among the topics covered on a recent exam were "time-management skills, different rank structure - just covering basics of the first few years. I'll be doing some pushing," said Bruegger.

Pagaduan added, "You take that knowledge when you go on the field exercises. You carry everything on your back, taking all those skills you learned with you. We do a lot of discussion, bringing in the instructors' personal knowledge."

While theoretical training is well and good for classroom exercises, going into combat is another story altogether. Despite the apprehension most civilians might feel about charging into a military hotspot somewhere in the world, the FSC cadets believe they will be, upon the conclusion of the program, ready for whatever their country asks of them.

Bruegger mentioned with no hesitation, "As an officer you have some training for wherever you're going to go, so you're prepared. It'd be nice to be stationed in Hawaii in the sun on the

beach, but if it calls for going to Iraq or Afghanistan it's fine because you're ready."

Transue added, "I've been on two deployments to Iraq. So I'm used to being deployed into some of the worst situations, as we call 'the stink'."

Instead of dwelling on worst-case scenarios, though, the cadets express optimism for their future careers in the military and their lives thereafter.

"I'm going to five-week training in Fort Lewis, Washington," Transue said. "It's all about leadership development and base training. You have to set up a patrol base, conduct patrol-base operations; you have to go out and do patrolling with your five-man squad while planning for ambushes."

"It's like basic, but with more work. It's the first real step to officership."

And what about life after ROTC? "I can't wait," Transue exclaimed. "It's going to be a major milestone since it's something I always wanted to do. I can't wait. I can just imagine how fast the information will be coming at me."

For students interested in more information about the ROTC program, the office of military science is located on the first floor of the Conlon Industrial Technology building. Applicants or those seeking more information can also email Maj. Pagaduan directly at pagaduan@fsc.edu.

Applicants must be enrolled at FSC and actively seeking their bachelor's or master's degree. A more detailed description of the program, and the official list of requisites for enrollment, can be found on the official Army ROTC website at www.goarmy.com/rotc.

Interested students can also register for MILS 1200 Basic Leadership or MILS 2250 Leadership & Teamwork for a first taste of ROTC life. Currently, FSC offers only basic ROTC Army courses while advanced programming will continue to only be available at WPI.

Students question campus construction

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So why is the money being spent the way it is? Administrators say it's all part of a larger plan to make the overall look and feel of the campus more appealing, and it does not mean they have forgotten about the students.

Jay Bry, assistant vice president of administration, says that the goal is to "spread projects between academic and administrative needs," and that several upcoming projects will greatly benefit the students.

"The Fitchburg State College Foundation Commonwealth has already purchased about nine properties ... all have been demolished and one will be a new home for Campus Police," he says.

Bry also says that much of this area will be used for more parking lots.

Many students have noticed that some projects have gone unfinished. Sonya Sponberg, an FSC senior, asks,

"Why did [the school] abandon the Hammond Center construction?"

Bry says that the campus is "still very interested in doing so as soon as funds become available," and that currently the school is waiting for the "state to pass a capital fund bill."

Once the college receives proper funding the school also plans to make the campus more accessible to the handicapped. The corner of Thompson, Hammond and Edgerly is to be completely redone and ramps will be installed in place of stairs.

"This project is 100 percent designed," Bry says, and it will not only help students in wheelchairs but also "stop water leaking" in Hammond and the lower levels of the other buildings.

For students concerned with the budget not going toward their education, Bry says, "Two new classrooms in

Thompson, room 310 and 312," have been finished and are ready to use.

Anyone notice those weird black boxes or projectors in the classrooms? Bry says that "75 to 80 percent of classrooms" have been set up with new technology that allows for presenting DVDs, PowerPoint presentations, cassette tapes, CDs and various other media.

Another growing complaint has come from students living in forced triples or students who have lost their common rooms due to building overpopulation; McTigue describes this as "an inappropriate crowding for many years."

Bry says that this will be remedied in the very near future.

"Housing was half empty seven years ago, so we needed to show that we had a need and demand for more housing" before implementing new buildings,

Bry says. He says that "the white house by Mara" has already been purchased by the school and will be demolished between now and finals in preparations for the Mara Village expansion set to be completed in Fall 2009. "This will add about 150 beds," says Bry.

Many students have already heard about the land acquisitions around campus, but what does the school plan to do with all this new space?

Bry says that the campus is trying to "clean up the neighborhood to make it safe and add more parking."

He says real-estate purchases will continue as funds become available.

While many of these projects will not be completed in time for current students to enjoy new buildings, more parking and safer streets, the college administration is looking out for the future at FSC.

Fashions look hot, even in winter

BY JULIE MILLER

Why go out looking frumpy in a big oversized winter coat? Just because the temperature is dropping doesn't mean that your wardrobe has to become frigid as well.

Instead of looking like an overstuffed teddy bear this winter, turn your wardrobe from drab to fab.

Cold weather is an excellent excuse to wear big comfy sweaters, vests, and warm fuzzy boots. This winter's fashion is all about the layers and brights.

How does one go about dressing in layers without looking foolish?

This is quite simple, actually: Make sure to look comfy rather than overdone.

Try wearing a big oversized sweater with a nice pair of skinny jeans or spandex.

If your sweater is long enough, winter tights are always cute and will keep your legs warm.

Longer tweed sweaters or perhaps a patterned or furry vest will be the perfect top layer and make you look fashionable — not like an Eskimo!

Scarves are one fashion must-have that will never go out of style. Try to incorporate some color in your wardrobe with a nice red scarf and even a cute little hat.

Boots are very in this year and can be worn over your jeans or tights. Try a higher-cut boot to add extra warmth to your calves.

Another must-have for this season are brights. When wearing brights, always pair with a neutral color such as black, gray, white, tan, or navy.

A bold color will

spruce up any outfit and bring some much-needed warmth to a cold winter's day.

When pairing brights with neutrals, try layering. Wear a bright shirt underneath a wool jumper, or with a pair of pants.

Colorful accessories are always a smart choice and will add a little pizzazz to your outfit.

A bright shoe or purse will go with any outfit, or for a bolder approach try a colorful belt or jewelry.

Be careful with brights, though. It's very easy to go overboard.

Chose one bright item in your wardrobe and pair with neutrals or patterns. Bright patterns can be paired together, such as a yellow floral print with another yellow flower print of similar design. Don't be scared to step out of the box and add a little color to your dull winter wardrobe!



STAFF PHOTOS BY NICOLETTA AMATO

Julie Miller looks through her wardrobe, left, to find the elements for successful layering. She chooses boots, accessories, and a scarf, above, to stay warm without looking frumpy.

Put down the pills, pick up yoga for health

BY BRITTANY ABRAHAM

How many television commercials are currently endorsing the newest, most powerful medications?

We take a pill for everything now, including high cholesterol and obesity, which can often be altered by creating a healthier lifestyle.

If the gym is above your level or too embarrassing, home gym equipment is too expensive and running before or after work is simply not an option, taking a pill to fix everything seems easy.

Don't give up just yet, though; there is still another option. Why not put down the pills, take a deep breath and take a look at what yoga has to offer?

Celebrities and celebrity trainers have long been raving about the benefits of yoga and meditation for the exercise of the body, mind, and spirit.

This attention has turned these ancient practices in a modern trend. With the rise of these practices, other ancient healing techniques have emerged and

have become popular with those looking for less invasive ways of healing and less aggressive ways of becoming fit and healthy.

Practices such as reiki, chakra balancing, and reflexology are becoming commonly paired with instructors who specialize in yoga or massage therapy, as healthy alternatives for spiritual and physical balance.

Deborah Korch or Northbridge, a registered energy worker, massage therapist, and clinical reflexologist, is more than a believer in these ancient practices.

"I am able, through my practices, to balance people's energy and bring them healing and wellness," she says. "I can find alternatives to the common medications and surgeries and increase the overall quality of life for people. If someone is open-minded when they come in to see me, they almost always see positive results."

Reiki, one of Korch's specializations,

involves regulating a person's energy through the contact of a reiki master's hands with their skin. Originating in Japan, this practice has reached Americans and is said to be beneficial for both emotional and physical distress.

Chakra balancing is a practice based upon the seven chakras, or energy divisions, of the body. Loosely based on the scientific nerve plexuses that regulate the body's endocrine system, this practice says that when all seven chakras are in balance, the body, mind, and spirit are also balanced.

"Believers of these practices believe that pain is energy that is blocked," Korch explains. "Through reiki and chakra balancing, one is able to remove these blocks and open energy channels to allow internal flow and balance, and therefore, healing and wellness."

Korch also explains that she is able to incorporate the more spiritual practices during her yoga classes, so that her students are able to benefit without

requesting the service or actually evaluating their personal beliefs on the topic. Most of the time, she says, people don't even realize it's going on, and skeptics don't have a chance to be skeptical.

With the Yoga Journal reporting yoga as a \$2.95 billion American industry as of 2006, it is obvious that Americans are beginning to take to these healing and spiritual procedures.

According to Korch and her colleagues in the Blackstone Valley area, women between the ages of 30 and 70 seem to be signing on for this "holistic approach" to healing more than any other demographic.

Ashley Locke, a 23-year-old yoga student, says, "Yoga has just begun to catch on in my age group. Many people my age either want a more high-impact workout or less of a spiritual experience. I think once yoga catches on the younger group is going to get really into the other healing techniques as well."

Moot Court team qualifies for nationals

The Fitchburg State College Moot Court team will represent the campus in national competition for the eighth consecutive year, securing three spots at the event.

Fitchburg State hosted the Eastern Regional Qualifying Tournament this month, where 36 teams competed for the chance to move on to nationals. Students Christine Brigham and Jim Abreau reached the semi-final round of the regional. The pair of Sharon Lewis and Jon Ide reached the quarter-final round. Students Sally Foster and Pat-

rick Gerry earned an at-large bid.

All three teams will participate in the American Collegiate Moot Court National Tournament on Jan. 18 and 19, 2008, at Drake University Law School in Des Moines, Iowa.

"Our students worked exceptionally hard this year and have once again proven that we can compete with any school in the nation when it comes to Moot Court. I am confident that they will more than hold their own at the national tournament," said Dr. Paul Weizer, adviser to the team and profes-

sor in the department of social science.

In Moot Court competition, students give 20-minute arguments on a legal case, and then are evaluated by lawyers, professors and judges. They are rated on knowledge of subject matter, responses to questions from the bench, and courtroom skills. Team members have seen numerous benefits from the skills they've learned.

The hypothetical case for this year's tournament is *United States v. William DeNolf*, which addresses the current controversy surrounding the meaning

of the right to bear arms under the Second Amendment, as well as the ability of Congress to regulate that right under the commerce clause.

Fitchburg State College's Moot Court team has made a strong showing at the regional event held at the college, advancing for national Moot Court competition seven times. The college has consistently advanced to the second day of national competition since 1998 and remains the only school in the nation to make the break in every national tournament.

Capt. Anna Morgan, MD
Brooke Army
Medical Center, Texas

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Massachusetts college graduates are now required to have health insurance. (Good idea.)

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STAFF PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY MEGAN BENEVIDES

Consumers who do their homework before attempting to upgrade are likely to have an easier time with Vista.

Upgrading to Vista? Read this first!

BY CHRIS POIRIER

Chris's Technology Corner

Windows Vista, Microsoft's successor to Windows XP, has sold over 60 million copies since its launch last January. Available in four different versions, Microsoft's much-hyped new operating system is billed as the most secure, easiest to use version of Windows ever.

It's clear, confident, and connected, but is it worth your hard-earned cash?

All marketing pitches aside, sometimes sifting through the hype is difficult. The time has come to separate the myths from the facts about Microsoft's newest operating system.

Myth: Vista features a revolutionary new interface, built from the ground up.

Fact: Vista's interface is evolutionary, not revolutionary. Eye candy aside, very little has changed from Windows XP's interface.

The start menu has been tweaked somewhat, with the addition of a "start search" feature, and the word "start" has been changed to a blue orb. Beyond that, both XP and Vista's start menus are identical.

Myth: Microsoft is no longer supporting Windows XP. XP users will soon have no choice but to upgrade to Windows Vista.

Fact: Not as soon as you think. While it is true that Microsoft will not be releasing any further XP service packs after the forthcoming Service Pack 3, it has been announced that their original plan to stop support for XP as of January 2008 has been pushed back to next June, at the earliest.

Additionally, while Microsoft will no

longer offer Windows XP to be preinstalled by manufacturers, system builders, and original equipment manufacturers as of next year, it will still be available in select markets through the year 2010.

Myth: Vista's system requirements are comparable to those of Windows XP.

Fact: Don't expect that just because a system runs XP well, it will also run Vista well. Vista's requirements are much steeper than those of its predecessor, especially in terms of random access memory and required graphics cards.

The new Aero Glass look (which, on compatible systems, displays each window in a transparent box), and Flip 3d (think of it as a virtual Rolodex, where all open windows can be cycled through in real time, at a 45-degree angle) are both resource intensive.

Myth: Vista will improve gaming performance. Games will sport richer textures, faster frame rates, and improved draw distance.

Fact: Eventually, perhaps, but not yet. Microsoft claims DirectX 10, its new rendering technology incorporated into Vista, will improve gaming performance, but DX10 graphics cards are not in the mainstream thus far. DX10 cards have not hit the \$100-\$150 "sweet spot" for consumers yet (most are in the \$300+ range),

and very few developers have written games to optimize the new technology.

Myth: Vista makes managing your music, video, and photos easier than ever.

Fact: Aside from a built-in image viewer, virtually every media management function in Windows Vista came right out of Windows XP. Everything from Windows Media Player, to shell folders, to Media Center remains virtually unchanged.

Myth: Upgrading from Windows XP to Windows Vista is a quick and relatively painless process.

Fact: While upgrading is undoubtedly streamlined (aside from a few short questions, namely entering your product key, accepting the End User License Agreement, and what type of install you're doing), expect it to take a while.

Two hour-plus installations are common, and longer isn't unheard of. That's assuming your system passed the compatibility test; if for any reason, hardware or software, it came up with a critical issue, the upgrade will be halted.

Myth: All of your hardware, software, and peripherals will work in Vista.

Fact: While Vista's support has improved substantially over the past several months, software updates and drivers are still spotty at best.

If you do decide to upgrade to Vista, check the manufacturers' websites, as they will often have updates to their products newer than the pre-installed ones that Vista provides.

Opinion: Billions of reasons to end the war

BY JULIE MILLER

In a recent issue of the Sun Chronicle, a southern Massachusetts newspaper, one citizen wrote about the misconception of peace marchers and anti-war protesters.

Arthur Kenyon wrote that people are not protesting against our troops, but against the Bush administration. "We know, and all should know, that military personnel are carrying out orders based on the lies that we are told from Cheney-Bush," Kenyon wrote.

He concluded that people should support our troops because they are members of our families, communities, and nation, and are out there simply doing what they are told.

I agree with Kenyon's opinion for a number of reasons.

First of all, I should point out that my boyfriend is an active and enlisted member of the United States Air Force and is stationed in Florida. I fully support him as well the rest of the United States military who serve our country and protect our liberties.

I fear for the troops who are sent overseas because they are simply doing their job. They oftentimes do not have a choice whether or not they are deployed. They are the United States military, so why can't we protect our own borders instead of nosing into everyone else's business?

Furthermore, according to the Washington Post, in 2006 the war with Iraq cost the American people more than \$94 billion.

Let's see here: Perhaps instead of spending that money on a war that seems to be going nowhere, where else could we apply those funds?

Oh, I know a good place! The United States is one of the richest countries in the world, and also one of the most powerful. We are the land of opportunity, and we pride ourselves on our material possessions.

However, why is it that there are over 750,000 homeless persons at any given time in our country, according to the National Alliance to End Homelessness?

And why is it that more than two years after Hurricane Katrina, many members of the New Orleans community are still without homes and proper nutrition?

Why is it that we can spend \$94 billion annually in this war, yet we cannot help the citizens of our own country?

Pet lovers have hearts, share homes

BY MARISSA GALLOWAY

"There's no place like home for the holidays" is a sentiment that applies to pets as well as people. Unfortunately, the number of homeless animals has been increasing.

Each year, shelters take in millions of animals with nowhere else to go; pet adoption is their ticket out.

Even people who aren't interested in adopting a dog or cat might want to check out www.mspa.org; the site gives a list of adoptable pets ranging from horses to hamsters. Petco pet stores have also started bringing in homeless pets of various species through their "Think Adoption First" program.

The Humane Society of the United States estimates that 6 to 8 million cats and dogs are put into shelters each year, but many of them will remain homeless as only half of those animals are being adopted. If no one adopts these animals, some of the shelters must euthanize them. The Humane Society estimates that around 3 to 4 million cats and dogs are euthanized each year.

"Shelters are always over-populated," says Lisa Andrejczyk, an employee of the MSPCA Western Massachusetts Animal Care and Adoption Center. "We have a large number of cats being taken in because they haven't been spayed and are over-populating. During the summer, on average, we take in about 30 to 50 cats a day. In the first two weeks of October alone we took in about 500 animals."

Many people are turned off by pet adoption because they are unable to get a kitten or a puppy, but the poor adult



STAFF PHOTO BY MEGAN BENEVIDES

A new kitten's arrival is worth celebrating, too.

animals do not get a second chance if they are not taken into a home and are left to die in a shelter. According to the Humane Society, "Every cat or dog who dies as a result of pet overpopulation - whether humanely in a shelter or by injury, disease, or neglect - is an animal who, more often than not, would have made a wonderful companion, if given the chance."

DJ Poladian, a senior at Fitchburg State College, says, "My parents adopted a cat from the Pat Brody Shelter in

Lunenburg. It's a Siamese mix. His name is Anthony. He was from a litter of kittens that the owner could not keep."

Not only did Poladian's family adopt a cat, but they also hit the jackpot when they adopted Becker, a full-size poodle. "Becker was adopted by my dad because he was in training to be a special-needs dog but he flunked out because he was too aggressive," Poladian said. "He may not be a great special-needs dog, but he is a great

family dog."

What's the best part about Becker? Poladian says, "We got him at 11 months old so he was technically still a puppy, but the best part was that he was fully trained at the age of 2 months, so we never had to take the time to train him."

Not every scenario is the same. Some animals are put up for adoption because some pets have elderly owners who can no longer care for them. Other people put their pets up for adoption because they've moved into an apartment where the landlord will not allow pets. Sometimes a lost animal is picked up and placed in a shelter.

There are so many loving animals in shelters waiting to be adopted, yet many people buy their pets from pet stores. Andrejczyk says this is a mistake. "Animals that are bought in pet stores come from puppy mills," she said. "Typically, the animal will be under-socialized, unhealthy, inbred, or usually mixed with some other breed."

"At animal shelters, the animals up for adoption are healthy, up-to-date on shots, spayed or neutered, and have a microchip" to track them if lost or stolen.

If you are interested in becoming a pet owner, you can look into local shelters such as Pat Brody's Shelter for Cats in Lunenburg, Animal Shelter Inc. in Sterling, and the Gardner Animal Shelter.

For more information on pet adoption or if you are interested in helping these animals, visit MSPCA.org or HSUS.org.

Service with a smile can be a tall order

BY: BRITTANY ABRAHAM

When college students need to earn money, they often turn to the food-service industry for jobs. Flexible schedules, short shifts, and nighttime hours allow working students to still have time for their studies - and a social life. Cash in their pockets at the end of every shift and a friendly, social atmosphere would seem to seal the deal.

But many students find out that what had appeared to be a piece-of-cake job can turn into a trying, part-time profession. It all depends on the customers.

In the United States, it is customary to tip service people 15 percent of the bill, before taxes. And a well-known adaptation to that rule calls for 20 percent for outstanding service - for example, if the server is friendly and attentive, refills your drinks without asking, promptly clears your dishes, wraps your food and presents the check in a timely fashion.

Many servers, however, complain that people often do not seem to abide by this rule.

"I don't know if people realize that we only get paid \$2.63 an hour," local server Dawn Ciccone said. "So many customers come in, order all sorts of expensive food, demand a ton of extras, and tip 10 percent." On slower nights, a server may have only three or four tables before the shift is over, so one



STAFF PHOTO BY MEGAN BENEVIDES

The Texas Road House staff aims to please, especially if the customers are courteous.

10 percent tip can seriously hurt the overall pay for the night.

With the economy plummeting and gas prices rising, people have little extra money to spare for extras such as dining out. This hurts the service industry, and makes it even harder for servers to make ends meet. But many of them understand this issue and try to make the best of it.

"I understand that people are going to come in, drink waters, get cheap sandwiches, and try to save some money," said Rich Spencer, a 25-year-old server.

"We all do that. It's people that come in, order off the 10-and-under kids' meal, and then complain that we have to charge them for their drink [because they are not under the age of 10]. Give me a break."

Big parties of eight or more are many servers' dream come true. The initial period of gathering drinks and appetizers that can be slightly stressful and time-consuming, but big parties often spend the latter part of the meal chatting among themselves. And the checks are often large, making a large

tip more likely.

Still, the wake-up call often comes when the customers in these big parties wait until the last minute to request separate checks. Most restaurants use a computer system that allows servers to separate bills fairly easily. Todd Miller, a server of almost a decade, explains that when parties inform the server beforehand that separate checks are needed, it usually isn't a problem at all. But when a party of 15-plus decides they want separate bills at the end of the meal, the server has to go back and try to remember exactly what each person had. And if they all decide to pay with credit cards, it can be extremely time-consuming.

Servers, like most workers, look forward to the end of their shift. For this reason, customers who come in five minutes before a restaurant closes can seem especially irritating. Drew Navaroli explained that servers often have a lot of sidework - cleaning, restocking, and closing down - to do before the doors are finally shut for good. The last thing they want to do is worry about the needs of an inconsiderate table that wants to sit all night.

Going out to eat can be a nice, leisurely pleasure with good food and good service. And considerate customers are likely to get the best service of all.